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ABSTRACT

This document presents a group learning activity that is designed to teach individuals how to use the case study technique to determine a community's need for a community education program. The document begins with an introduction to the case study method and a list consisting of suggested tasks to complete when analyzing case studies and questions to ask when performing each task. Presented next is a description of the learning activity, which is intended to train students to perform a community-wide assessment and review the techniques of case studies by taking part in a town hall meeting, role playing a variety of important roles within the town, and participating in the dynamics of community education development. Also included are the following: description of the fictitious Centertown, U.S.A., that is the subject of the case study; map of the city; list of the nine steps constituting the assessment assignment; list of possible roles for the role play activity; lists of the fictitious city's strengths, limitations, and needs; and lists of steps in the processes of establishing community education and evaluating progress in the program development process. (MN)

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CENTERTOWN, U.S.A.

The Case Study

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE CASE STUDY METHOD

A case study is a written description of a problem or situation requiring analysis and decision-making skills. Most cases depict real problems, and are based on true situations. In some instances, the data is disguised, and infrequently, the cases are fictional. Typically, a case study focuses on a single incident or special problem. Cases are not intended to be comprehensive or exhaustive. Indeed, most cases are like "snapshots" of a particular situation within a complex environment.

The purpose of a case study method is to develop and enhance skills in:

- analysis of problems
- decision making
- planning
- conceptual formation (development)
- critical analysis
- evaluation

Normally, this is achieved through efforts to integrate theory into practice, and to build on the experiences and knowledge base of participants. The case study method allows participants to learn from one another as well as from the text, the faculty, and straight lectures. Because of these concepts, the case study method is an especially effective technique for those with more "job" knowledge and practical experience.

Because it describes reality, a case study may be frustrating. Real life is often ambiguous. Cases reflect those peripheral facts. The central problem often competes with other issues for attention. And it is difficulty to formulate policy recommendations. In the case method, participants are obliged to deal with available data; often the "right" answer or "the correct" solution is rarely apparent. Differences among participants and faculty members typically arise. Conflicting recommendations emerge as participants with varied perspectives, experiences, and professional responsibilities consider the case outcomes.

The preparation of a case study varies with the background, concerns, and natural interests of the participants. In general, however preparing for discussion following the case involves these steps:

- read the case carefully to establish the facts and needs,
- determine the decisions which need to and how they will be made,
- consider the consequences of the decision(s),
- articulate priorities and other alternatives,
- develop recommendations and other possible outcomes

A helpful next step in case preparation requires meeting in small groups to review data, compare analyses and discuss strategies for completing or solving the case.

The differences which emerge through discussion add richness and importance. The faculty member's role is to involve as many participants in presenting and defending their analyses and recommendations. The faculty moderates the discussion, calls on participants, guides the discussion through asking questions, synthesizes comments and seeks alternative responses leading to a reasonable solution of the case.

SUGGESTED TASKS IN ANALYZING CASE STUDIES:

TASKS:	QUESTIONS TO ASK:
Become familiar with case substance	What are the facts? What is happening? What is the relevant information available?
Determine central issues	What decisions need to be made? Who is responsible for making decisions? What factors, issues, & consequences need to be considered?
Identify objectives and goals	Achievable outcomes? What / which are the most desirable? Why? & To Whom are they important?
Ascertain resources & constraints	Which forces support / oppose actions? Which resources can be marshalled in support of the actions? What are the major obstacles?
Ascertain the nature of conflicts	What is the substance of the conflict? Can the conflicting points be reconciled?
Identify the dynamics of behavior	Who is exercising leadership? Are there interpersonal conflicts? Are the persons involved effective in support of their respective positions?
Determine major alternatives	Discuss the ideas and strategies which have been presented! Is compromise possible? Alternatives proposed, complementary or mutually exclusive?
Assess consequences of decisions and actions taken . . .	What actions are likely to result from decisions made? Unintended consequences emerge? What additional consequences?
Consider appropriate strategies and priorities . . .	Describe the most effective ways of implementing the objectives and decisions made. Intermediate actions? Long term?

The Centertown Case

I. Planning

Goals: Upon completion of this case study activity, participants will be able to do a community-wide assessment, review the techniques of case studies. Take part in a town hall meeting, role play a variety of important roles within the town, and participate in the dynamics of community education development.

Materials Needed: The Centertown Case, pencils and paper for discussion and notes, and creative imaginations.

Time: One hour

Size of group: 10 to 25 participants

II. Involvement

Step 1: (Option at the beginning or end - Introduce the case study method and suggested tasks in analyzing case studies as an advanced organizer) .

Step 2. Have the group carefully read over The Centertown Case, noting the locations of the river, various schools, parks, the university, key industrial areas and shopping locations on the Centertown Map provided.

Step 3. Have the group analyze and discuss the strengths, limitations, special needs and resources available for Centertown.

Step 4. Have the group participate in a Centertown Town Hall Meeting using various role plays provided. Discuss the needs, special programs and the possibility of creating a vision and mission statement process for Centertown.

Step 5. Further, the group may wish to discuss the possibility of establishing a Community Education Program for Centertown through greater use of the schools and establishing an empowering process of neighborhoods / groups to address identified community problems.

III. Internalization

The "self appointed" Centertown Mayor with the assistance of the Superintendent of Schools (through role playing) leads the Town Hall Meeting to discuss a variety of options: A) Assessment Strategies of Centertown, B) Reviewing strengths & limits of Centertown, C) Discussing resources available and E) Developing a vision/mission statement and a possible community education program for Centertown.

IV. Reflection and Generalization

Through experiencing a Town Hall Meeting and role playing the important positions, the group understands the community assessment process. The leaders identify key problems of a "divided" Centertown, discuss the resources available and consider the establishment of a Community Education Program, thus addressing some of the major problems and issues related to the Centertown Community.

V. Application & Follow-up

Conducting assessment activities,
Participating in a Town Hall Meeting,
Participating in various leadership and supportive role playing,
Undergoing and resolving conflicts,
Considering Community Education
as a vehicle for empowering the community
and getting people involved in the process.

CENTERTOWN, U.S.A. - THE CASE

Centertown, which is located in the Midwest, has a population of approximately 71,000 people. The usual diversified industry and numerous small companies employ the work force. Although the town has the cyclical employment problems of many communities, a strike in any one industry would not paralyze the city. In the event of a lay-off or labor problems, the affected workers are sometimes able to find temporary employment; however, at a reduced income. The unemployment level has been around seven percent in the past few years. Typically those who are unemployed are considered "unemployable"; the majority of the unemployed are minorities.

The community has grown rapidly since the 1960 census which showed 25,000 people. One hundred percent of the population was then white, and in the 1970 census when the population grew to 50,000 there were only about 150 non-white or minority families. Current statistics reveal approximately twelve percent of the population are minorities. The average income in Centertown ranges from less than $7,000 to over $175,000 per family with about seven percent considered to be earning below the poverty line.

Despite the fact that the community has been rapidly expanding, it has the problem of deterioration in its original business district or city center area. This area and the surrounding residential area is occupied, in large part, by the city's minority population. The whole city center area is suffering from decreasing property values due to rezoning for multiple dwellings and to the influx of lower economic class white and minority families. Many long established businesses have moved to the new shopping centers near the NE and NW city limits. Incidents of arson and robberies are on the increase in the city center or downtown area, and the welfare rolls are expanding.

In addition to the downtown shopping district, the city has two other large shopping centers which lie on the edge of the city. These have attracted much of the former downtown businesses so that most people in the community seldom visit the older sections of Centertown. Business in the community is much the same as in other cities of similar size. There are the usual array of goods and services available. In addition to serving urban needs, Centertown is the marketing and purchasing center for farmers within a 30 to 40 mile radius. An increasing number of retail stores remain open at night and on weekends to accommodate the buying public.

Sixty-six percent of the populace in Centertown claim to be Protestant, twenty-four percent claim to Catholic, and ten percent claim "other" or no religious affiliation. Of the Protestants there are no particularly predominant denominations although there are a high percent who claim to be either Methodists or Baptists. The Catholics provide parochial education for most of their elementary age children. The churches advocate good works, of course, so long as "we don't rock the boat!"

A few cultural opportunities have been developed in Centertown. In Centertown the usual women's clubs, sororities, and church groups provide "culture" and "support" to the citizens of the community. A public library and its three branches libraries serve the community. At present, there is no large civic auditorium (a high school auditorium is used), but there are plans to build one soon which will be financed through community donations and local support.

There are eight recreation areas used as community parks. Two are located in the downtown area. The Parks and Recreation Department has spent a large part of its time and funds to beautify Centertown. Several park sites have been purchased on the fringes of the city, but they are only "appreciated" there. Recreation is largely available through "private" swimming pools and bathing clubs. Many teenagers claim there is nothing to do in Centertown.

Currently, the city has two senior high schools, two middle schools, twenty elementary schools and one parochial school (K-8). The older center-city schools are overcrowded, but no plans are being formulated to alleviate the situation. The curriculum in the schools has remained traditional; however, one elementary school is attempting a non-graded curriculum for the first time this year. The older schools, which includes the Main Street High School and one of the middle schools, are both antiquated. The school system does offer adult education and community enrichment classes at night, but little efforts are being made to publicize them. The attendance at these programs is light. A few classes are offered for those who want to complete their high school training or GED. They are held in the new high school if there are enough students to make up a class. Attempts are being made to approve construction of a building for vocational education -- a situation which developed after the federal government informed the local school board that it would furnish one half of the money. Lack of money always seems to be the big problem as far as the Centertown School Board is concerned. In addition to the public and parochial schools in Centertown, there is a medium size state university which serves about 18,000 students and a commercial school called the Midwest Business College.

Centertown has many service organizations: Lions Club, Optimist Club, Rotary, Kiwanis, etc., as well as the usual service agencies. These include: a branch of employment security, welfare, The Salvation Army, The United Fund, YMCA, YWCA, Boys/Girls Club, The American Cancer Society, Urban League, Community Action Council, Family Services, Goodwill Industries, the Comprehensive Mental Health Association and others.

Previously two separate newspapers, a morning and evening paper, each published by people with "opposite" political views, operated out of the same building. Recently, the newspapers merged into one daily paper. There are three local radio stations and a public television station. A major, regional teaching hospital in the area serves the health care needs of Centertown.

Centertown citizens, rather conservative by nature, are content to leave matters untouched. According to Chamber of Commerce records, nothing has been done in the past fifty years to upset any long established city policies. However, a group of local citizens recently formed a Council of Action Committees spearheaded by the local Jaycees attempting to move Centertown off "dead center".

Centertown is divided geographically, politically, racially, and economically by the river which flows through the center of the town. North and west sections of Centertown are inhabited by the wealthy Republican conservative citizens who live around the state university area. The south and east areas are inhabited by the poor Democratic minorities and poor white transplants from the south, who live near the industrial centers where there is a higher level of crime and drugs. The construction of homes are taking place at a rapid rate in the NW areas, other than downtown. Local real estate brokers have successfully kept Centertown somewhat segregated through redefining and redistricting strategies, but open housing is being passionately debated at the Centertown Council Meetings. At present; however, the procedures are moving rather slowly yet steadily! Everyone is optimistic that a solution will be found. . .

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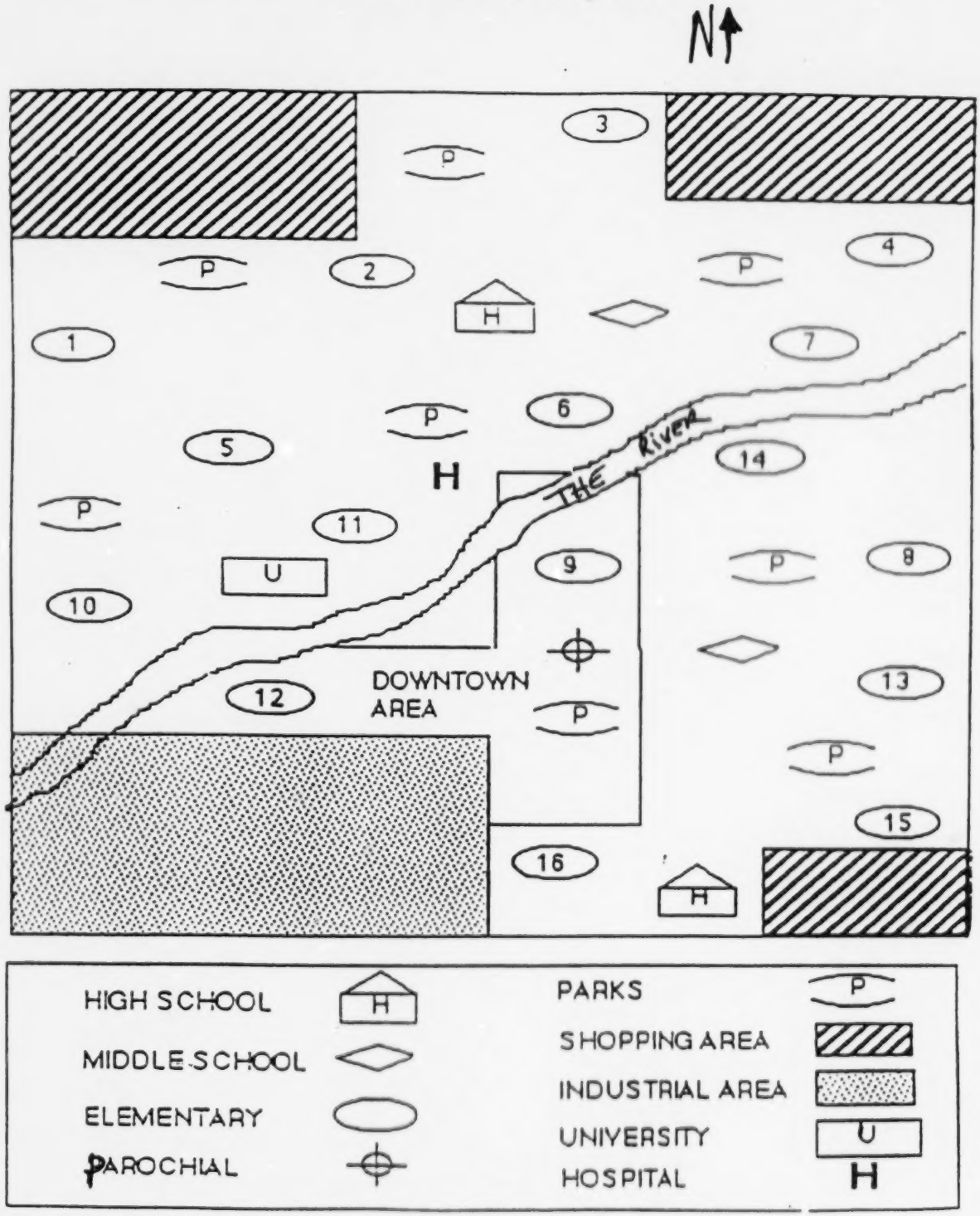
Note: Data for the Case Study have been collected from various Census Tracts and from other sources of information.

CENTERTOWN, USA



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Assignment - Centertown, U.S.A. CASE STUDY

Do The Case Assessment:

1. List and describe the strengths and limitations of Centertown.

2. Describe the existing (physical, material, and personnel) resources available for Centertown.

3. Diagnose what you believe are the special Centertown needs and existing community problems.

4. Recommend ways how the needs might be met and how the problems might be solved.

5. How might you use interagency and collaborative strategies for assisting Centertown to solve its problems?

6. List three or more strategies for establishing a Visioning Process for Community Education Development for Centertown, USA.

7. What would be some of the programmatic effects, outcomes, and consequences for Centertown, U.S.A.?

8. Describe how you would evaluate your effectiveness as a Centertown community educator and/or as an advocate for change?

9. Additional commentaries or suggestions:

POSSIBLE ROLES FOR CENTERTOWN, U.S.A. -- TOWN HALL MEETING:

1. Mayor
2. Superintendent of Schools
3. Lawyer
4. Industrialist
5. Militant Black Leader
6. Farmer
7. Teenage youth
8. President of the Jaycees
9. Businessman
10. President of the PTA Council (woman)
11. Minister
12. Senior Citizen
13. Labor leader
14. Hospital administrator
15. Inner city mother
16. Suburban white professional
17. City councilperson
18. Director of City Recreation
19. Building contractor or Real Estate Broker
20. City Engineer
21. College student
22. Teacher
23. City planner
24. Member of news media.
25. Other community member

** Have each person take two minutes, tell who each is and what is his or her point of view.

Role Play: Enact A Centertown Town Hall Meeting

Assignment: Discuss more effective utilization of Centertown . . .
and
Possible Community Education Development for Centertown

THE CENTERTOWN USA CASE

The Community Development Planning Process:

Strengths Listed:

Diverse economic base
Stable work force
Strong service and civic organizations
Diverse population
Good Cultural base
Media Strength
Many educational resources
Rapid town growth
Adult education program
Supportive businesses

Limitations Listed:

Real or hidden segregation in this community
High minority unemployment
Increasing crime rate
Uninvolved youth / lack of youth activities
Aged infrastructure and downtown buildings
Several hidden political agendas

Needs Listed by Other Groups:

Active neighborhood organization(s)
Involved citizens and media representatives
Training programs for the unemployed
ABE Program Needed
Youth activities -- recreational, vocational, & enrichment
Cultural/ multi-cultural activities
Crime Watch Program
Sub-housing revitalization -- Suggestion - "Do A Habitat for Humanity Project"
Downtown area revitalization

PROCESS FOR ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY EDUCATION FOR CENTERTOWN, USA

1. Develop a community (wide) vision statement with a possible mission statement

2. Empower the people / Develop a stronger, wider base of support

3. Create linkages between community leaders and groups

4. Create a strong support base through an advisory committee; (to study, plan, act , & evaluate options)

5. Hire a community education coordinator: (to marshal the resources and forces to attack the discovered and identified community problems and needs)

6. Initiate and develop a sample school program (i.e. to offer classes, activities, special programs)

7. Evaluate results and outcomes

8. Develop additional community education school programs

Discussion:

It is important that the plan be developed before the C.E. coordinator is hired. Reasons: Until the plan is developed the community does not know what kind of coordinator they need -- what strengths they need to look for in a coordinator.

If the coordinator is hired before the plan is developed, the coordinator will tend to move the community education program toward his/her own areas of personal strengths / interests which may not necessarily address the vision or needs of the community. An outside consultant will generally play a more neutral role as facilitator than a hired coordinator might.

Ways to Evaluate Progress:

1. The number of people attending (classes, programs, activities)
2. The kinds / numbers of classes offered.
3. Participant evaluation forms
4. Repeat attendees / customers.
5. Random sample checks
6. Check with representatives -- How is the program reaching all segments of the population with equal success?
7. Repeat -- do an additional needs assessment -- annual process
8. Pre and post community attitude / evaluation surveys / questionnaires